

ST. MARGARETS CATHOLIC CHURCH

LOANHEAD



26th MAY

1878



1978

SOUVENIR BROCHURE

on the occasion of the

CENTENARY

of the opening of

Saint Margaret's Church

Loanhead

Sunday, May 26th, 1878

The Editor would like to express his thanks to many people in the preparation of this Centenary Brochure, in particular His Eminence Cardinal Gordon Gray, Canon Mohan, Mr. Charles Gray and Mr. Robertson Sutherland. The latter gave permission to use his "Loanhead — The Development of a Scottish Burgh" with the enthusiasm and graciousness that is so natural to him. Specially gratifying was the response from many parishioners of St. Margaret's, whose willingness to help was only matched by their desire for anonymity.



SECRETARIAT OF STATE

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Your Eminence,

The Holy Father was pleased to be informed that the Parish of St. Margaret in Loochhead is celebrating the centenary of its establishment.

On this joyful anniversary His Holiness is united spiritually with all His sons and daughters in the Parish. He gives thanks to the Lord for the graces bestowed on the parishioners over the past hundred years through the preaching of the word of God and through the sacramental ministry of the Church, especially through the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which in the expression of the Second Vatican Council remains "the source and summit of all Christian life" (Lumen Gentium, 11).

The Holy Father prays that this celebration will be for the whole parochial community an occasion for renewed fervour in authentic Christian living, according to the standards of the Gospel.

With these sentiments His Holiness sends his Apostolic Blessing, in pledge of joy and peace in Jesus Christ.

With every personal good wish, I remain

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+ J. Card. Villot

Cardinal Gordon Gray
Archbishop of Saint Andrews and Edinburgh
St Bonnet's
42 Greenhill Gardens
Edinburgh
EH10 4RZ



FROM HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL GORDON GRAY

ST. MARGARET'S, LOANHEAD has the distinction of being the first Church to be opened in this Archdiocese following on the Restoration of the Scottish Hierarchy. However, it enjoys a greater distinction. It has survived the social, industrial and religious changes of a century, strong in its Catholic faith and practice, and set to enter its second century with courage in faith, commitment in the love of God and in a unity of purpose demonstrated in the generosity that has achieved the beautification of its Church and the provision of its magnificent Hall.

To you, Father Rhatigan and to you parishioners of St. Margaret's, young and old, I record my gratitude for your faith and I ask God to bless you and safeguard your unity among yourselves and within God's Church.

May 1978.

+ *Gordon J. Cardinal Gray*

Messages of good wishes and congratulation are beginning to arrive from former parishioners scattered throughout the world, some of whom left St. Margaret's more than forty years ago. This is an extract from a letter of a young nun, Sister Irene of Jesus, (Josephine Purcell) now working in Billere in the South of France. "Dear Fr. Rhatigan and dear everyone in Loanhead, I write to assure you all how much I am united with you in preparing and celebrating the centenary of our dear dear parish. I hope all will turn out as you desire. I might add, how much you merit it, because I know how much work and generosity has gone into the preparations for this event. It is indeed a sacrifice for me not to be able to be with you all in person, but it is with a deep and true joy that I offer this sacrifice to God for the parish which gave me the faith, through my Christian parents and family. I ask God to preserve among you your deep faith. One thing I can say is that I never heard long speeches on the faith, but I saw it lived I ask Our Lord to bless all your families and to call many of your children to serve him in the priesthood and religious life. May one of the graces of this centenary be that some of your youngsters will hear Christ's call. Please pray that I may remain faithful to my calling.

"Wishing you once again a very happy centenary."

"LOANHEAD OF LASSWADE"

"God gives all men all earth to love,
But, since man's heart is small,
Ordains for each one spot shall prove
Believed over all."

KIPLENS

Before the Industrial Revolution, Loanhead had at first glance little to recommend it, apart from a few scattered cottages and an abundance of whins and heather. It was never mentioned in official documents except as "Loanhead of Lasswade" i.e. the place at the head of the lane that led to Lasswade. However, even unknown to the few inhabitants of the area, the local countryside had something else besides whin and heather, the same "black stanes" that the monks from nearby Newbattle Abbey, had dug from the earth since the fourteenth century. Although Robert Adamson, Burgess of Edinburgh, was granted the right to win "the Haill mine of Lasswade" in 1528, almost two hundred years were to pass before any serious attempt at mining began. So, like many other places in Scotland, it was coal that helped Loanhead grow into a sizeable community, but today, unlike them, Loanhead is still producing an abundance of coal. Last year the local Bilston Glen Colliery produced more than a million tons.

The ruins of the church that looked after the spiritual needs of the people, can still be seen in the old churchyard at Lasswade. It was opened and dedicated on May 5th 1240 by Bishop David di Bernham of St. Andrews and continued to serve the people for more than three hundred years. The last known priest before the Reformation was Rev. William Niddrie who was appointed to Lasswade in 1529.

It is impossible to say when the faith was first preached locally. As far back as 360 A.D. we know of the young Ninian going to Rome, where he was consecrated Bishop, and coming home with Papal authority to preach the Gospel. We remember St. Columba, St. Aidan and St. Eatu, who founded the monastery of Old Melrose about 650 A.D. From Melrose came St. Cuthbert, who worked untiringly in this part of Scotland. However, succeeding generations did not build very successfully on the solid foundations laid by these great missionaries. Long before the Norsemen came to terrorize the country, local chiefs were fighting each other with incredible ferocity. For centuries, the Church struggled to survive, and it was not until the eleventh century that she received new life and vigour with the coming of St. Margaret to our shores. With her son, David I, continuing her great work, a new dawn had broken in the Church's history. Indeed a new era in the country itself had begun. Now, not only spiritually, but in the fields of education and commerce, Scotland could compare with any other country. Our area of Scotland was part of this great revival, beginning with the foundation of St. Mary's Abbey at Newbattle when King David brought the Cistercians from Melrose in 1140. Over the years many other places of worship were built in the surrounding countryside — Cockpen, St. Michael's Inveresk, Soutra Hill and (as we have already mentioned), Lasswade. In our own present parish of St. Margaret, that magnificent gem, the Collegiate Church of St. Matthew at Roslin, was founded in 1450.

The faith flourished but so did the wealth of the Church, and when the Reformation came to Scotland, this temporal prosperity was used as an excuse for wholesale plunder and desecration. It is one of the ironies of history that Newbattle Abbey, which had done so much to invigorate the locality, both spiritually and materially, now had as its Abbot, one Mark Ker. Renouncing his Catholic faith, Ker enthusiastically pushed the new religion. History records that he subscribed to the "Contract to defend the liberty of the Evangel of Christ", while Parliament made him Commendator of the Abbey of Newbattle.

The Reformation saw the virtual extinction of the Catholic faith in this area. The records of the nearby parish of Liberton tell that conversion to Protestantism was complete. We can

assume the same applied to Loanhead. Penal laws were passed to make life impossible for nonconformists. Scotland differed from England in that there was no escape here from Protestant worship by the payment of fines. In 1571 the Archbishop of St. Andrews was hanged, "dying as he had lived one obstinate papist". During the periods of intense persecution in the seventeenth century when many priests and lay people suffered, survival for any Catholic seemed almost impossible. Many lay people went into permanent exile to preserve their faith. We all recall the martyrdom of St. John Ogilvie in 1615, but perhaps less well known is the fact that he was hanged in Glasgow after a much shorter period of prison and torture than several of his Jesuit brethren who died in their beds.

1793 saw the first Catholic Relief Act, but it was not passed without a great deal of opposition. When relief for Catholics was first mooted, resolutions of protest were passed by various bodies all over the country, similar in content to the following published in an Edinburgh newspaper of 1779:—"The ten incorporated trades, merchants and a respectable number of the inhabitants of the town of Dalkeith, alarmed with the apprehension of a repeal of the Penal Statutes against Popery, have lately held several meetings to deliberate on this subject, and were unanimously of the opinion that however much they are disposed to allow all reasonable liberty of conscience so far as may be consistent with the peace and safety of the kingdom, yet, the members of the Church of Rome, being confessedly subjects of a foreign jurisdiction which with them has power to dispense with all laws and obligations, even most sacred oaths when it may promote their own wicked purposes, and having embraced a religion not only fraught with the grossest and most impious absurdities and superstitions, but which openly avows such principles as are inconsistent with the peace and safety of civil society, a religion that has all along been propagated by fire and sword, plots, massacres and persecutions—that such can have no title to legal toleration. They therefore resolved to concur with other societies in promoting every prudent and constitutional measure for preventing such repeal, and immediately opened a public subscription which is already filled up with a considerable sum for the purpose of carrying said measures into execution".

Was it fear of slowly awakening Catholicism that prompted such a resolution or could Dr. Johnson's remarks on Londoners and Popery equally apply to the Scots: "There are ten thousand stout fellows in the streets of London ready to fight to the death against Popery, though they know not whether it be a man or a horse"?

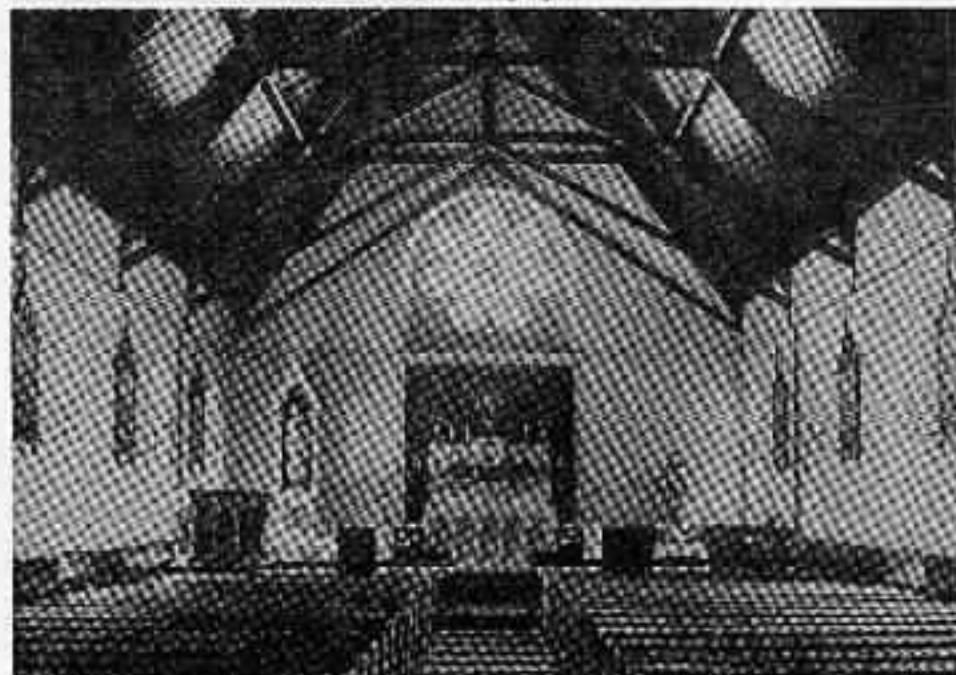
The repeal of the Penal Laws, the Industrial Revolution demanding manpower never envisaged before, periodic famine in Ireland, all helped the resurgence of Catholicism. The new century saw changes that could never have been imagined a generation earlier. In 1814, St. Mary's Cathedral, Broughton Street, Edinburgh was opened followed by St. Patrick's Church about twenty years later. Meanwhile in 1827, Pope Leo XII had divided Scotland into three Vicariates—Northern, Western and Eastern. In December 1834 a small group of Ursuline sisters came to Edinburgh. Of more immediate interest to us was the opening in 1845 by Father Carruthers of a church in Portobello to serve the Catholics of Portobello, Dalkeith, Leith and Musselburgh. Within five years the parish priest of Portobello, Father Mantica, was saying Mass occasionally in Dalkeith. We can be certain that the Catholics of Loanhead gladly walked the five miles to the tiny attic in Dalkeith to worship God and receive the Sacraments.

1854 was a significant year in the history of the church locally. On 25th March, feast of the Annunciation, the parish of St. David, Dalkeith was founded and two years later, St. David's Church was opened, thanks to the generosity of Lady Cecil, Dowager Marchioness of Lothian, a recent convert to the faith. For more than twenty years, the Catholics of Dalkeith were pleased to share their magnificent church with their fellow Catholics from Loanhead, Roslin and Penicuik.

St. David's congregation of less than a thousand grew rapidly. Since the Industrial Revolution, there had always been a trickle of workless Irishmen to Scotland, but after the Great Famine of 1847 the trickle turned into a flood that lasted for decades. These unfortunate people brought nothing with them except a capacity for hard work (and some might add hard drinking!) and their Catholic faith. Like other industrial areas in Scotland, the

Lothians received a large quota of Irish families. Indeed it can be said that by 1870, the Church in Scotland had lost much of its traditional membership by emigration to the New World, to be succeeded by tens of thousands of poverty stricken Irish Catholics. Prompted by the growth in the local Catholic community, in 1871 Lady Lothian, always eager to help financially, bought a site for a church in Roslin, to serve both Penicuik and Loanhead. However, it was soon apparent that both villages needed a church and the ground at Roslin was sold. Meanwhile the Jesuit Fathers at Dalkeith, in spite of their numerous other commitments, said Mass locally as need arose. The building of the reservoir in the Moorfoot hills supplying Edinburgh with water saw a big influx of Irish workers, and Mass was said there once a month in a temporary wooden chapel built by the contractor. Mass was also said whenever possible in both Roslin and Bilston. This piece of research was received with some surprise by the present parishioners who had no idea that before St. Margaret's was built, there were so many Mass centres in the parish. Strange to relate, there seems to be no record that Mass was ever said in Loanhead itself.

However, a site was eventually bought in Loanhead for £323 and in 1876, a church from designs by Mr. C. Goldie was built under the supervision of Fr. Thomson, S.J. Dalkeith. The building cost £1543 and once again Lady Lothian was the chief benefactress. Sadly, she did not live to see the church completed, dying in Rome in 1877.



1878 was an historic year in the history of the church in Scotland with the restoration of the hierarchy in March. Earlier this year His Eminence Cardinal Gordon Gray summed up what the restoration meant: "The Apostolic Letter of Leo XIII of March 4th, 1878 did far more than replace with six diocesan bishops, the three Vicars Apostolic who, since 1827 under the direction of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide, had guided the re-emerging Church in Scotland; far more than restore the Church to the status and prestige it had enjoyed before the Reformation. It restored to the Church the responsibility for shaping its own pastoral policy, for rebuilding its necessary structures and for the provision of its spiritual and material needs from its own native resources in manpower and finance".

Two months later, St. Margaret's Loanhead became the first church opened in the new Archdiocese of St. Andrews and Edinburgh. On Sunday, May 26th, 1870, St. Margaret's was solemnly opened by Archbishop Strain. We can only guess at the feelings of rejoicing and thanksgiving of the three hundred local Catholics; feelings certainly not conveyed by the brief statement in the "Scotsman" of Monday, May 27th: "A new Roman Catholic Chapel was opened yesterday at Loanhead by the Right Rev. Dr. Strain, Archbishop of St. Andrews who sang High Mass, assisted by the Rev. Fathers Thomson of Dalkeith and Whyte of Edinburgh as deacon and sub-deacon. The Archbishop also preached. The building has a plain but good effect".

St. David's, Dalkeith continued to serve St. Margaret's for three years, with Mass every second Sunday until 1881, when Loanhead became a separate parish with Fr. E.J. Hannan as parish priest. Fr. Hannan was a native of Co. Limerick and in certain circles may be best remembered as founder member of Hibernian F.C. For twelve months Fr. Hannan also had care of Ponicuik before it too became a separate parish.

Twelve parish priests have looked after the spiritual needs of St. Margaret's parishioners during the past century:

Rev. Joseph Hannan	1881 - 1884
Rev. John Lee	1884 - 1890
Rev. Frederick Hoban	1890 - 1901
Rev. Charles Murdoch	1901 - 1912
Rev. Patrick Green	1912 - 1916
Rev. Joseph Long	1916 - 1917
Rev. Dominic Hart	1917 - 1923
Rev. P.J. Burns	1923 - 1926
Rev. Ed. Morrison	1926 - 1936



Father Morrison's successor, Father William Maccabe, now Canon Maccabe, parish priest of Lennoxton, although less than two years at St. Margaret's is remembered with deep affection, not only by the older parishioners but by many non-Catholics in the village, with whom he established the most cordial relations. The story is still told of a famous parish mission conducted by Fr. Maccabe's brother, a Passionist Father. Senior parishioners recall with tears in their eyes many incidents from that mission. Fr. Maccabe's fervent support of a certain football team in the West of Scotland still evokes smiles, particularly when Saturday evening Confessions called before the football results were known in these pre-T. V. days.

His successor was Fr. Patrick Carden, who ministered here for thirty years, easily the longest serving priest in the history of St. Margaret's parish. The memory of his work will assuredly last. His pulpit oratory in a pulpit that could hardly contain his fine physique is still fresh in many minds. He was, in quote one parishioner "a very hard taskmaster, but the fruits of his straightforward manner were soon seen and appreciated by the people". Money was very scarce in his early years in the thirties at Loanhead, but he always seemed at ease in clearing debt, no matter how great. But as indicated earlier, it was in the pulpit that he had his greatest success. He was, to quote the same parishioner "in his element when preaching, especially on the parables".

OUR PARISH PRIEST

BY "One of Us"

Father Thomas Rhatigan, a native of Co. Luccis, Ireland, was educated at St. Kierin's College, Kilkenny, where he was ordained on 8th June 1947. He came to Louisa as our parish priest from St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh in 1968 on the death of Father Carden.

At a time of change with its resulting problems, Fr. Rhatigan had no hesitation in implementing the decrees of Vatican II and leading his parishioners into a new era.

His work has been one of building, materially as well as spiritually. In the Church, the new sanctuary, the stations of the cross and the stained glass windows are some of the changes carried out in a simple but expressive manner under his guidance.

His encouragement and persuasive prompting helped to inspire those parishioners, who have worked so generously in their leisure time for the past two years, to give us our new St. Margaret's Hall.

We now enjoy a very close participation in our Sunday Mass and are rightly proud, we believe, of our congregational hymn singing.

Bridges of communication have been built with other churches in the community. This new relationship is never more manifest than at our joint service in Holy Week, which is always a spiritually exhilarating experience.

The obvious increase in the numbers receiving Holy Communion must be related to Father's frequently expressed desire for a greater devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. More vocations to the priesthood and the religious life is a wish very dear to his heart. We devote the first Friday of each month to this intention.

As we begin the second century at St. Margaret's we know that Fr. Rhatigan is doing what he can to lead us in the way of Christ. We have no doubts that we have a Church ideally suited to God's worship and a hall that can only improve our community life.

It will be our joy and privilege to pray and work for the great hopes that he entertains for the future of St. Margaret's and all its people.



"I know that I am called
the message was quite clear
and yet I cannot see the how,
the why,
I feel so small, so weak,
so ill-equipped for such a task.

And yet I am prepared to say my "yes"
and undertake the risk
and enter the unknown
responding to the call
trust fully treading my way
the only way that leads to life,
to Him"

Henry Rohr

BISHOP JAMES MAGUIRE

St Margaret's most illustrious son in the past hundred years was Bishop James Maguire. James Maguire, son of John Maguire and Bridget Clark was born in Loanhead on 29th August 1882. He was educated at Blairs College, Aberdeen, and in France at Issy-les-Moulineaux and Paris before his ordination in Edinburgh on 22nd July 1906.

Most of his priestly life was spent in Fife, apart from a few years as parish priest of Lenninstown and St. Andrews, Ravelston, Edinburgh. In the parishes where he served, he won the love of his people without seeking it, because of his complete sincerity and unassuming piety, his real and friendly interest in their well-being, an interest which made him their natural champion in all their difficulties. While in Fife, he became a member of the Local Education Authority after the passing of the 1918 Education Act. It is perhaps for his work in the field of Catholic education that he is best remembered. He quickly mastered the details of the new Act and played an invaluable part in securing the full benefits to Catholic schools from that important statute.

Outside his priestly work, his chief interest lay in the study of Scottish Church history. Old books and letters, directories and trust deeds were his favourite field of research. Few had his knowledge of the vicars apostolic, bishops and priests of Scotland since the Reformation. He collected many of their pictures, which he annotated with biographical details gleaned from his wide reading. Because of his interest in the past, Archbishop McDonald handed over to him the diocesan archives for assessment and documentation.

In October 1939 he was appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Dunkeld with the right of succession to the aged Bishop Toner. On the feast of St. Andrew, the 82 year old Bishop consecrated his Coadjutor and successor in the presence of large numbers of miners and their wives from towns and villages in Fife, where Fr. Maguire had worked for many years and from Loanhead, his birthplace. Alas, however, Bishop Maguire only lived a few years, dying at Dundee on October 10th 1944, almost five years before Bishop Toner himself.

* * * * *



Memorial window to Bishop Maguire, installed shortly after his death.

MY PARISH CHURCH

by Charles Gray, F.R.I.B.A., F.R.I.A.S.

St Margaret's has been my parish church for many years, and I was very pleased when Fr. Rhatigan asked my help in redesigning the interior, in line with the recommendations of Vatican II. Architecturally speaking, St. Margaret's is a very solid stone building of good design, but I had always regarded the interior as generally uninteresting. Fr. Rhatigan's predecessor, Fr. Carden, had hoped to change things shortly before his untimely death. Great credit must, however, be given to Fr. Curden for the installation of the memorial Rose Window to Bishop James Maguire in 1947. This magnificent window of excellent design and colour scheme was the work of Edinburgh stained glass artist Mr. McGourty. Fr. Carden was also responsible for the present benches in the church.

However, I must get back to my part in the recent changes. As there was no structural division between sanctuary and nave, the first thing done was to build a gothic arch of wood and plaster emphasising the separation, and to build a new sanctuary floor in oak two steps up. The sanctuary had little depth, and the need to bring the altar forward, so that the priest



could say Mass facing the people, made it impossible to place the tabernacle immediately behind the altar. Accordingly, it was decided to place the tabernacle on a podium at an angle between back and side wall on the right hand side on a six inch platform, with the priest's chair at a similar angle on the other side.

The altar was redesigned as a five inch thick table top with a two foot wide leg at each end. When the old altar rails were removed, it seemed a pity to discard the wrought iron gates which were made up of the Greek letters *ALPHA*, *OMEGA*, *CHI* and *RHO*. Both parish priest and architect still disagree as to who was the author of the brilliant idea that the gates be adapted to form a wrought iron panel under the altar table. This adds immeasurably to the dignity of the altar.

The wooden pulpit was removed and an ambo in wrought iron was installed, jutting out from the sanctuary steps on what we used to call the Gospel side. One unique feature of this ambo is the provision made for placing the open Lectionary on it at the congregation's side, outwith of Mass times. This is now the regular practice at St. Margaret's. A standing sanctuary lamp in wrought iron (movable) replaced the usual hanging one.

With the removal of the old altar, the vast wall space in the sanctuary asked for a large crucifix. As it happened, I had in my possession a full size plaster model of a crucifix sculptured by the well known sculptress Miss Julian Allan, who at the time lived in nearby Bulerno. A special feature of this compelling piece of work is that the arms of the crucified Christ are almost vertical. This had aroused criticism in some quarters, but we were prepared to take the risk. The effect of this crucifix when put in position was and still is extraordinary.

When some of the original windows in the church began to give trouble it was decided that the ordinary leaded lights should be replaced. Having been responsible for introducing to Britain the work of the famous French artist Gabriel Loire of Chartres, I was excited by the prospect of bringing his windows to Loughhead. His type of window is made of coloured glass (not stained) about one inch thick, 'sculptured' and set in concrete. The French term 'Dalles de Verres' means 'glass tiles'. Alas, we could not afford to go to Gabriel Loire for all our windows, so Fr. Charles Norris from Buckfast Abbey was commissioned to do the windows in his style. His blend of colours is delightful and when the sun beams in from the South the effect is beyond words.



I have mentioned Gabriel Loire. The Stations of the Cross are his work—wood carvings in the form of a cross. Similar Stations have been erected in a few other churches in the diocese.

My words cannot convey the simple charm that St. Margaret's holds for the worshipper, but there is one word I never tire of hearing used about my parish church and that is, **DEVOTIONAL.**

OUR SCHOOL.

A forerunner in many ways of the Scotland Education Act of 1872, which introduced compulsory attendance at school until the age of thirteen, was the Shaftesbury Act of thirty years previously. This Act forbade the employment of all females and boys under ten in coalmines. Besides lacking the 'education for all' system we now enjoy, the practice of child labour in the mines until 1842 (and probably for some years afterwards in spite of the Act) was sufficient in itself to rule out any kind of adequate schooling for the young. The Parliamentary Commission which preceded the Shaftesbury Act of 1842 took evidence from children working underground in Loanhead. We are indebted to Mr. R. Sutherland for his research in this matter. In his scholarly work "Loanhead—The Development of a Scottish Burgh" he quotes an extract from Page Arnot's, "A History of Scottish Miners". This not only gives an insight into prevailing conditions, but also shows the pathetic yearning for schooling by a twelve year old girl who said in evidence: "I get up at three in the morning, and gang to work at four, return at four and five at night. It takes us muckle time to come the road, and put on our clothes. I work every day, for when father does not work, the master pays me six a day for bearing wind fur him.

"I never get porridge before my return home, but I bring a bit of outcake and get water when thirsty. Sister and I can fill one tub of 4½ hundredweight in two journeys. Sister is 14 years of age. My sister and brother do not read, but I did once go to school to learn reading when at Sir John's work. I have forgotten all the letters.

"The Ladder Pit in which I work is get drippin, and the air is kind of bad, as the lamps do no burn so bright as in guid air. My father straps me when I do not do his bidding. The work is very sair and fatiguing. I would like to go to school, but canna owing to sair fatigue".



Boys of St. Margaret's School with their headmaster, enjoying themselves at Aberdour, while Europe was preparing to destroy herself, August 1939.

Until the Scottish Education Act of 1872 such local children as received schooling had to walk a long way for the privilege. While Protestant children walked to the parish school at Lasswade until 1873, Catholic children walked much further to St. David's school, Dalkeith, until St. Margaret's school was opened by Fr. Hoban in September 1891. Miss Jane McKay, the first headmistress and her three lady assistants enrolled two hundred and thirty seven children on opening day—hardly a pupil-teacher ratio that would win approval today! It is perhaps worth noting that when Mr. Anthony Doherty became headmaster in 1920, eight of his nine predecessors were women. This was the familiar pattern of Catholic education elsewhere—much of the pioneering work was carried out by women, nuns as well as lay teachers.

The pupils came from places as far apart as Hurdiehouse and Roslin. Apart from Hurdiehouse, the present St. Margaret's school takes pupils from as wide an area, but at least today's children are not expected to walk the distances of earlier years.

A new St. Margaret's school with all the expected amenities was opened in 1961. Today, Mr. James Cooney, M.A., has one hundred and thirty one pupils in his charge, with six teachers to give a more respectable pupil-teacher ratio than Miss McKay, the first head, could ever have visualised.

The old school was used as a public library for sometime after 1961 and was then closed for many years. In 1975, the diocesan authorities bought back the school and playground on behalf of the parish for £11,000, and the parishioners immediately started to convert the building into a parochial hall. Voluntary labour has played a major role in the conversion; indeed without such labour, our limited financial resources could never have attempted the task. On 25th April, a few weeks before our centenary celebrations, His Eminence Cardinal Gray blessed and formally opened this truly magnificent hall.

Mention has been made of St. Margaret's longest serving headteacher, Mr. Anthony Doherty. Although he has been dead for more than thirty years, admiration of his work, not only for his school and church, but for the community at large, has not lessened with the passing years. He was an uniquely talented man who used his God given gifts most generously for the benefit of his fellow parishioners and townsmen. He loved his school, but still found time for a multitude of other interests—organist, choirmaster, town councillor, conductor of the Station Ironworks Choir, artist, composer, play producer—the list seems endless. Only the Lord knows what other heights he would have scaled if he had not died in middle age in 1943. One of his former pupils recalls: "I had been at school only a week or two in 1920 when our head teacher Miss Craigen retired on her impending marriage. I well remember her successor, Mr. Anthony Doherty and his first day at St. Margaret's. It was soon obvious that he loved his new job and took great pride in his school and pupils. We had the greatest respect for him, and outside school hours loved nothing better than speaking to him, or rather listening to him, especially after Thursday evening Benediction at the church gates.

"He became conductor of the Station Ironworks choir and produced a series of light musical plays such as *Phyllida*, *Hong Kong*, *The Country Girl* and *The Toreador*. I remember *Phyllida* best of all. It was his first musical and when he entered the school the morning after its production, we all stood up and cheered. When the Station Iron-



works Company folded for financial reasons, he produced dramas and light comedy in the parochial hall. He painted all the scenery, while Mrs. Doherty made the costumes.

"At school he was always the "Master", could be severe, but always just and ever anxious to hear how older brothers and sisters were facing in the outside world. His death was a great loss to St. Margaret's. He was a genius, but one of the most humble men I have ever known".

WE COULDN'T KEEP HIM OUT!



No too say the passkeepers at all our Sunday Masses.

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